



NEWS RELEASE

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RELEASE DATE: Wednesday, August 9, 1967

The ACLU Board of Trustees termed as "unjustifiedly insulting" Attorney General Arthur J. Sills characterization of the Union's activity in collecting evidence of police brutality as "ambulance chasing" and an "incitement to riot".

Emil Oxfeld, President of New Jersey ACLU, said "The ACLU is a 47 year old non-profit organization. It is dedicated to the vindication of constitutional rights of all persons. Its work is carried on by a large corps of volunteer attorneys who at the request of the Union, donate their legal services to the clients they represent. Hundreds of thousands of dollars of legal services are volunteered each year to the cause of civil liberties by these highly dedicated members of the bar. To call such persons "ambulance chasers" is a libel hardly worthy of response".

"The leaflet which the ACLU issued after the riot" said Oxfeld, "asked the residents of the Negro ghetto to preserve evidence of police destruction and to give statements of police brutality. Calling upon persons to assert

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their constitutional rights is a historic function of the ACLU. We fail to find any basis for General Sills' characterization of the leaflet as an "incitement to riot". It was designed to induce persons to seek a legal redress for their grievances. Use of the courts is the precise opposite of rioting."

"It is precisely at moments of crises that we must be most concerned about constitutional processes and rights. It is easy to obscure the admonition of the Bill of Rights during periods of relative calm -- it is at times of upheaval that the community in its anger and resentment must reflect upon the implications of its course. Law enforcement officers must not permit the public pressure of hysteria to overwhelm them. The ACLU will not deviate from its defense of unpopular people or causes when in its judgement such defense is required by the Constitution."

CONTACT: Henry M. di Suvero
642-2084
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865-6881 (after 6:00 P. M.)